



Tom Barrett
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, CHE
Commissioner of Health

Health Department

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WISCONSIN HEAT AWARENESS DAY---JUNE 15

City of Milwaukee Health Department Reminds People to be Aware of Heat-Related Symptoms and Illness

During the summer, we have occasional days of extreme and sometimes prolonged hot weather. The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) encourages everyone in Milwaukee to pay attention to symptoms of heat-related illness and to take the appropriate protective measures if and when temperatures rise to extremes.

"Each year in Milwaukee people succumb to heat-related illnesses, all of which could have easily been prevented. It's important for everyone to learn the warning signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and keep a close eye on the very young and the elderly during temperature extremes," said Mayor Tom Barrett.

The people at greatest risk during extremely hot and humid weather are:

- Elderly persons and those who are isolated or live alone
- Infants and young children
- Those on certain medications including drugs to treat mental illness.
- Those with chronic health conditions such as obesity, heart and lung ailments
- Those who work outside for a living

Sustained temperatures in excess of 90 degrees Fahrenheit coupled with humidity levels in excess of 35% are the conditions which pose a risk of heat-related illness and death.

"In the event that extremely high temperatures or episodes of prolonged hot weather are forecasted in Milwaukee, the MHD will activate its "Extreme Heat Action Plan" by alerting partner community agencies that serve or provide outreach to the most susceptible populations in the City. The MHD will also establish a "Heat Hotline" so that citizens can obtain specific information on protective measures including Cool Spots in the community." said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker.

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General symptoms of **heat exhaustion** include fainting, rash, fatigue, and nausea. Skin may become clammy and moist. If symptoms of heat exhaustion are present, immediate action should be taken to reduce body temperature. **Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition** that can happen very quickly. Hot, dry skin, the absence of sweat, nausea, confusion and unconsciousness are symptoms of heat stroke. Immediate medical attention is critical: call 911 and cool the victim.

To prevent heat exhaustion or heat stroke, individuals at highest risk should spend the hottest part of the day in a cool, preferably air-conditioned place. Individuals who do not have air conditioning in the home should try to get to a location that does, such as a public library, community center, or shopping mall. People may also find some relief from the heat by going into their basements or to lower levels of their home.

Never leave pets or people, especially children and infants, unattended in cars--for even brief periods of time. Even with windows cracked open, temperatures inside a car can rise to life-threatening levels in a matter of minutes. Make frequent checks on the status of elderly or ill relatives or neighbors. If necessary, move them to an air-conditioned environment during the hottest part of the day.

Strenuous activity should be avoided during the hottest part of the day. If such activity is unavoidable, drink plenty of fluids and take frequent breaks in air-conditioned or shaded areas.

Finally, when temperatures are above 90° F, the MHD recommends that the following precautions be taken:

- To avoid dehydration, make a point of drinking more fluids during hot weather. Rapid weight loss may be a sign of dehydration.
- Use fans to increase ventilation unless temperatures exceed 90° F, at which point fans become ineffective in reducing heat-related illness.
- Cool showers, baths, and sponge baths can be used to reduce body temperatures. In addition, wet clothing has a cooling effect.
- Spending time in a air-conditioned space or even the basement will help prevent heat –related illness.

For more information on heat related health concerns, visit the City of Milwaukee Health Department at www.milwaukee.gov/health

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